

REMARKS

In the Office Action dated July 7, 2004, the Examining Attorney enumerates several objections and rejections. Each of these issues will be addressed in the same order as provided in the Office Action.

Drawings

The Examiner has recommended that a draftsman be employed and the applicant will certainly obtain the services of a competent draftsman to prepare formal drawings accompanying the payment of the issue fee.

In the interim, the applicant is addressing the specific objections to reference numeral “52” being utilized to designate both “an outer face” and “an upper face.”

The applicant has inadvertently referred to “an upper face” while referencing character **52** in the specification. Character **52** should have consistently referred to “an outer face” throughout the specification. Accordingly, the drawings are believed to be proper as the amendment to the specification correctly, and now consistently, identifies the “outer face” as reference numeral **52**.

Claim Objections

Claim 3 is objected to for the informality of “the J-channel” in line 7 of claim 3 lacking proper antecedent basis.

A channel member is identified in line 2 of claim 3 and thus the enclosed amendment to claim 3 remove the “J-“ from J-channel and now provides proper antecedent basis.

Claim Rejections 35 USC § 102

Claims 1 and 2 were rejected as being anticipated by Champagne, U.S. Patent No. 5,675,955. Claim 1 as originally filed was too broadly drafted to overcome the anticipation rejection. Accordingly, claim 1 has been amended.

Champagne shows the use of a bridging member **25** which is placed in a J-channel as shown in Figure 10 of that reference. Once installed, the free end of a siding panel is inserted into a downwardly opening “V” formed in the bridging member. This downwardly opening “V” is at least partially supported on an outer leg of the “V” by the inwardly extending lip.

This bridging member as shown and described in Champagne differs from a structure of the retainer as claimed by amended claim 1. Specifically, amended claim 1 requires that the retainer have an engagement tab terminating at an end with the end separated from the outer face by the siding panel when installed. As shown in Figures 5 and 9, the bridge member **26** is shown in contacting engagement with the outer face **23** when a siding panel is installed in Champagne. In fact, the bridge member **26** might fall out as shown in Figure 4 without this feature. Accordingly, Champagne cannot be modified to meet the limitations of amended claim 1. Claim 1 as amended by enclosed amendment is now believed to be allowable.

Claims 3–15 as originally filed were rejected as being anticipated by Champagne. Claims 3-14 as originally filed were rejected based on the Champagne reference. Claim 15 was indicated as being allowable over Champagne.

Accordingly, the limitations of claim 15 have been added to claim 3 and now claim 3 is believed to be allowable for the identical reasons that claim 15 was indicated to be allowable in the first Office Action.

When making claim 3 allowable, the limitations of claims 13 and 14, along with claim 15 were added to claim 3 thus, claims 13-15 have been cancelled through the enclosed amendment.

Claim 16 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of originally filed claim 18. Claim 18 was indicated as being allowable in the first Office Action. Accordingly, as affected by the enclosed amendment, claim 16, 17, 19 and 20 are now believed to be allowable and claim 18 is cancelled.

Conclusion

As affected by the enclosed amendment, claims 1-12, 16-17 and 19-20 are believed to be allowable and such action is respectfully requested. No additional independent claims have been created and no additional claims have been added. Accordingly, no additional fees are believed to be due with this response.

Respectfully submitted,

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***** VERSION SHOWING CHANGES MADE *****

[00020] The retainer **64** illustrated in Figure 5 is an alternatively preferred embodiment and includes an engagement tab **74** which is biased toward and preferably against one of the outer face **52** and/or the lip **60** of the J-channel **50**. The biasing is accomplished through the utilization of shoulder **76** connected by curve **78,80** to wall member **82**. The shoulder when combined with the curve **78,80** provides resiliency to the engagement tab **74** so that the engagement tab **74** is preferably displaceable towards the inner face **54** so that a panel **66** may be slid intermediately engagement tab **74** and the outer face **52** of the J-channel **50**. Additionally, the outer face **52** may be somewhat resilient relative to the engagement tab **74** so that the outer face **52** and/or lip **60** is resiliently disposed relative to the engagement tab **74**. The retainer **64** can be formed where the engagement tab **74** would otherwise be above the outer face **52**, however, after formation, the tab **74** placed below the ~~upper~~ outer face **52**.

***** VERSION SHOWING CHANGES MADE *****

[00022] The shoulder 76 is preferably a spanning member which is utilized along the curves 78,80 to bring to the engagement tab 74 against the lip 60 and/or ~~upper surface~~ outer face 52. The engagement tab 74 and at least a portion of the wall member 82 may be substantially parallel as illustrated. The shoulder 76 may be substantially perpendicular to one of the engagement tab 74 or wall member 82 or downwardly angled from the wall member 82 and acutely angled relative to both the wall member 82 and engagement tab 74 as illustrated. Alternatively, the shoulder 76 may be upwardly angled relative to the engagement tab 74 so that it is obtusely angled relative to the engagement tab 74 or the outer face 52 of the J-channel 50. In some embodiments the shoulder 76 and engagement tab 74 may be integrally connected and difficult to distinguish where one begins and the other ends.

***** VERSION SHOWING CHANGES MADE *****

[00027] While the retainer **64** of the preferred embodiment is somewhat “S” or “Z” shaped, other configurations may also be utilized to provide at least some resiliency to the engagement tab **74** to locate and bias the tab **74** towards the outer ~~sur~~face **52** of J-channel **50**.

***** VERSION SHOWING CHANGES MADE *****

1. (Currently Amended) A J-channel connection for use with an inserted siding panel comprising:

a J- channel member having an inner face, a bridge, and an outer face, said bridge connecting the inner face to the outer face, said inner face and said outer face being substantially parallel to one another and spaced apart by a channel, said outer face having a cantilevered end spaced from the bridge; and

a retainer having a wall member resiliently connected to an engagement tab terminating at an end, said wall member fixedly secured relative to the inner face of the J-channel member, said engagement tab biased toward the cantilevered end of the outer face of the J-channel member;

a siding panel having an inserted end,

whereby the engagement tab and the cantilevered end of outer face cooperate to capture ~~an~~ the end of ~~an~~ the inserted siding panel intermediate the engagement tab and the outer face in an inserted configuration with the siding panel separating the end of the engagement tab from the outer face in the inserted configuration.

2. (Currently Amended) The J-channel connection of claim 1 wherein the cantilevered end of the outer face has an inwardly directed lip, and the lip and the engagement tab cooperate to capture the inserted siding panel therebetween and the end of the engagement tab is separated from the lip by the inserted siding panel.

3. (Currently Amended) A channel connection for use with an inserted siding panel comprising:

a channel member having an inner face, a bridge, and an outer face, said bridge connecting the inner face to the outer face, said inner face and said outer face being spaced apart by a channel, said outer face having a cantilevered end spaced from the bridge and an inwardly directed lip extending from the cantilevered end; and

a retainer having a wall member resiliently connected to an engagement tab, said wall member fixedly secured relative to the inner face of the channel member, said engagement tab biased against the cantilevered end of the outer face of the J-channel member in a pre-panel insertion configuration; and

a siding panel having lugs directed toward the outer face of the channel member and an inserted end captured intermediate the engagement tab and the inwardly directed lip extending from the cantilevered end of the outer face in an inserted configuration

4. (Original) The channel connection of claim 3 wherein the cantilevered end of the channel member further comprises an inwardly directed lip, said inwardly directed lip contacting the engagement tab in the pre-panel insertion configuration.

5. (Original) The channel connection of claim 3 wherein the inner face and the outer face of the channel member are substantially parallel.

6. (Original) The channel connection of claim 3 wherein the bridge is perpendicular to the outer face.

7. (Original) The channel connection of claim 3 wherein the bridge is perpendicular to the inner face.

8. (Original) The channel connection of claim 3 wherein the inner face of the channel member has a length greater than a length of the outer face.

9. (Original) The channel connection of claim 3 wherein the wall member of the retainer is fixedly secured to the inner face of the channel member.

10. (Original) The channel connection of claim 3 wherein the wall member is parallel to the inner face of the channel member.

11. (Original) The channel connection of claim 3 wherein the engagement tab and the wall member are substantially parallel.

12. (Original) The channel connection of claim 11 further comprising a shoulder connecting the engagement tab and wall member.

13 – 15. (Cancelled.)

16. (Currently Amended) A J-channel connection in combination with an inserted siding panel comprising:

a J-channel member having an inner face, a bridge, and an outer face, said bridge connecting the inner face to the outer face, said inner face and said outer face being substantially parallel to one another and spaced apart by a channel, said outer face having a cantilevered end spaced from the bridge and an inwardly direct lip extending therefrom; and

a retainer having a wall member resiliently connected to an engagement tab, said wall member fixedly secured to the inner face of the J-channel member, said engagement tab biased toward the cantilevered end of the outer face of the J-channel member; and

a siding panel having lugs, said siding panel inserted intermediate the engagement tab and the cantilevered end of the J-channel member into the channel into an installed configuration with said lugs contacting one of the retainer and the inwardly directed lip.

17. (Original) The combination of claim 16 wherein the siding panel is inserted along an insertion plane and the insertion plane is intersected only by the siding panel in the channel.

18. (Cancelled.)

19. (Original) The combination of claim 16 wherein the J-channel member has a width and the retainer has a width and the widths of the J-channel member and the retainer are substantially equal.

20. (Original) The J-channel of claim 16, wherein the siding panel is movable relative to the retainer in the installed configuration.